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"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

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EDITORS

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Byron

By Lawrence Durrell

The trees have been rapping
At these empty casements for a year,
Have been rapping and tapping and
Repeating to us here
Omens of the defeating wind,
Omens of the defeating mind.

Headquarters of a war
House in a fever-swamp
Headquarters of a mind at odds.

Before me now lies Byron and behind,
Belonging to the Gods,
Another Byron of the feeling
Shown in this barbered hairless man,
Splashed by the candle-stems
In his expensive cloak and wig
And boots upon the dirty ceiling.

Hobbled by this shadow,
My own invention of myself, I go
In wind, rain, stars, climbing
This ladder of compromises into Greece
Which like the Notself looms before
My politics, my invention, and my war.
None of it but belongs
To this farded character
Whose Grecian credits are his old excuse
By freedom holding Byron in abuse.

Strange for one who was happier
Tuned to women, to seek and sift
In the heart's simple mesh,
To know so certainly
Under the perfume and the politics
What undertow of odours haunts the flesh:
Could once resume them all
In lines that gave me rest
To watch the fat fly Death
Hunting the skeleton down in each,
Like hairs in plaster growing,
Promising under the living red the yellow—
I helped these children by their sex
Discountenance the horrid fellow.

I have been a secretary (I sing)
A secretary to love

In this bad opera landscape
Trees, fevers, and quarrels
Spread like sores: and the gilded
Abstractions like our pride and honour
On this brute age close like doors
Which pushing does not budge.

Outside them, I speak for the great average.

My disobedience became
A disguise for style in a new dress
Item: a lock of hair.
Item: a miniature, myself aged three,
The innocent and the deformed
Pinned up in ribbons to posterity.

And now here comes
The famous disposition to weep,

To renounce. Picture to yourself
A lord who encircled his life
With women's arms; or another
Who rode through the wide world howling
And searching for his mother.
Picture to yourself a third: a cynic.
This weeping published rock—
The biscuits and the glass of soda-water:
Under Sunium's white cliffs
Where I laboured with my knife
To cut a *Byron* there—
I was thinking softly of my daughter.

A cock to Aesculapius no less . . .

You will suggest we found only
In idleness and indignation here,
Plucked by the offshore dancers, brigs
Like girls, and ports of call,
In our commerce with Liberty the whore
Through these unbarbered priests
And garlic-eating captains:
Fame like the only porch in a wall
To squeeze our shelter from
By profit and by circumstance
Assist this rocky nation's funeral.

The humane and lawful in whom
Art and manners mix, who sent us here,
These sorts of figures from a drawing-room
Should pause themselves once
Under these legendary islands:
A landscape hurled into the air
And fallen on itself; should see
Where the frail spines of rivers
Soft on the backbone intersect and scribble

These unbarbered gangs of freedom dribble
Like music down a page and come
Into the valleys with their small
Ordnance which barks and jumps.
I, Byron the soft head of my heart bumps
Inside me as on a vellum drum.

Other enemies intervene here,
Not less where the valet serves
In a muddle of papers and consequences:
Not less in places where I walk alone
With Conscience, the defective: my defences
Against a past which bears behind,
Writing and rewriting to the bone
Those famous letters in my mind.

Time grows short. Now the trees
Are rapping the empty casements.
Fevers are closing on us at last—
So long desired an end of service
To the flesh and its competitions of endurance.
There is so little time. Fletcher
Tidies the bed at dusk and brings me coffee.

You, the speaking and the feeling who come after:
I sent you something once—it must be
Somewhere in *Juan*—it has not reached you yet.
O watch for this remote
But very self of Byron and of me,
Blown empty on the white cliffs of the mind,
A dispossessed His Lordship writing you
A message in a bottle dropped at sea.

Exposition of a Method

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FILM PROJECT

by Barbara Deming

PART II

"ENTERTAINMENT" FILMS, *continued*

IN A FILM called "Mr. Muggs Goes To Town" (Monogram), Muggs, a young hoodlum, is hired as chauffeur for a millionaire. He brings his entire neighborhood gang along with him for the fun; and proceeds jauntily to make himself and his gang at home. He eyes the millionaire's daughter, and remarks to the gang that she'll be fun to educate; he boasts to the other servants of the fact that he's well known down at the police station; remarks casually to the gang: "Don't take anything this trip." The film throughout leans heavily for its appeal on this flaunting of Muggs' amorality. On the other hand, the plot of the film labors forward elaborately to have him acquitted of the same amorality. It stages a theft by an outsider, has Muggs suspected, has him then clear himself, and stand a martyr. The plot also features a special development. The millionaire's daughter has a fiancé who is a stuffy young man and has never been able to raise her blood pressure. As the film proceeds, this young man discards his books, discards his glasses, discards his Boston accent, learns to say "ain't," learns to jitterbug and, at last, crescendo,

learns to kiss the girl so that she knows it. Through emulation of Mr. Muggs, he has become a man.

One could say that this film makes no sense, is just the result of hasty, thoughtless production. But there is one standpoint from which it makes a very particular kind of sense. One can talk first of the deep-lying yen which the producers are finding it good business to provide with dream release. And one can then interpret the kind of fulfillment that yen is given, in terms of the censorship the dream must pass—a censorship which wears two faces, one face that of the producer, one that of the public.

Thus the film indulges the yen of the less privileged to invade the ranks of the privileged. This yen finds a sort of relief at two quite distinct levels. At one level it is allowed to relieve itself in crude and violent and anarchistic fashion. But if license were to be granted it here, morality would impinge. The audience could not call this dream by its proper name and indulge itself comfortably, irresponsibly. So at another level events are called by a different name. At this level the less privileged come not as invaders but as healers, come not to overturn but to restore, come to regenerate the millionaire's son-in-law, to make a man of him. Here the yen is granted a seemingly more "constructive" fulfillment; and in this guise the dream gets by the censor.

But how constructive is this fulfillment, examined closely? It is a good idea to examine it in the light of certain verbalizations prevalent in topical films—verbalizations about the common man and his importance. It is pertinent, in fact, to view this dream as a sort of Hollywood version of Henry Wallace's Century of the Common Man. Needless to say it is a perversion of Wallace's concept. Here indeed the Hollywood common man comes into his own. But in what precise fashion? He comes into his own not in terms of any appreciable bettering of his social, cultural or economic position. He successfully imposes his own untutored tastes on the "over-educated" rich. He leaves his mark. But he does not advance himself.

Here something more should be said about the censorship film dreams must pass. It may be justifiable to accuse producers of re-

fusing, instinctively, the kind of day-dream that would threaten their own political or social interests. But it must be emphasized that as box office profit is at stake for them as well as political profit, they must submit to certain minimum demands. They cannot run counter to any live clear hopes on the part of the public; they cannot stop the dream yen short of a fulfillment that would be vigorously anticipated. They can withhold only what will not be clearly missed. Neither can they, of course, run counter to live doubts, give an audience a dream, however sweet, out of which it would wake. No matter what one cares to posit about the motives, conscious or unconscious, of the producers, the most salient evidence for the historian remains the evidence granted of audience hopes and fears, visions and confusions.

But the historian could not be sure of the significance, as dream, of a film like "Mr. Muggs" unless he knew whether it stood as an isolated case, or whether its ingredients were to be found in other films as well.

It is not at all an isolated case. The victory of popular taste which it features is to be found over and over again in a wide variety of films. The scholar is taught slang, Iturbi is persuaded to boogey it up, Shakespeare is swung. Often, as in "Mr. Muggs," this victory is called a great blessing. The common man appears in the guise of Rousseau's natural man, and when through his agency the natural untutored graces are restored to the land, minor miracles attend—men are made men, the old are made young, the estranged are united. Sometimes this disguise is dropped, spite has the floor, and the scene is rowdier. But whatever the variation of the theme, it is apt to be rendered with intensity.

The effete fiancé of the millionaire's daughter has his counterpart in many a film. One of last year's musicals, "Swing Out the Blues," coined a phrase for the type: aristocrackpot. There are many variations of the type, both male and female, ranging from characters who are actively nasty to characters who are merely silly and ineffectual. In whatever variation, the aristocrackpot is again and again the common man's antagonist. Again and again

it is this character the common man must either dispose of as a rival, or (still greater feat) translate, remake after his own image.

The aristocrackpot is almost invariably one of the specially privileged. If he has not riches, then he has special training—he is the highbrow artist; but usually he is the member of a rich family. But is the antagonist ever the head of a rich household, the father of the family? Very, very rarely. In fact it is the father, frequently, who opens the door to the common man, who, when the common man invades the house, makes him welcome. In "Million Dollar Kid," for example, another film featuring Muggs and his gang, when the boys appear at the millionaire's house they are snooted by the butler; he orders them to the service entrance. For this the millionaire promptly fires the butler. No, the father of the house, the king of the rich castle, the money-maker himself, is almost never the common man's antagonist. The one man who is not censured for being rich is the man who makes the money. It is those who live on the money he has made, and with this money seek advantages, who are the enemy.

A few important exceptions can be noted. In some recent war films the big money-maker has been the common man's antagonist. These are the dramas of resistance in Nazi-ocupied countries. The films sometimes show the big industrialist, or the big business man selling out to the enemy, while the taxi driver, the fisherman, the little clerk remain steadfast. These money men are of course men of another country. And in many films even these men receive a careful whitewash. The big industrialist only seems to be a collaborationist traitor; he has indeed put his big factory at the disposal of the Nazis, but in the end we learn that he is having defective armaments turned out; he has entered the enemy camp to bore from within. One film, "In Our Time," dismisses the big money-maker as an important enemy figure in a particularly interesting fashion. Again, the aristocrackpot is whipping boy for him. But here the aristocrackpot is not another person; he is the money-maker himself. The money-maker gradually assumes his mask. The man is a big Polish count. At the beginning of the film we see him hunting boar with the Nazis, and a

melodramatic musical accompaniment tags him clearly as a potent and cunning villain. Little by little the portrait begins to undergo alteration. We gather at the beginning of the film that the count operates many large mines and industries; but as the film proceeds it is as a landowner that we come more and more to focus on him. For we follow the fortunes of a simple English girl who has married the count's nephew and gone to live with him on a large farm, subsidized by the count. On the count's farm the tractor is unknown, the peasants still work with their hands, and the land is unable to pay for itself. The heroine fights to introduce changes. Under her influence, the count's nephew becomes more and more the common man, and he fights with her. Their aim is to make the farm self-supporting. The count resists this; being rich, he doesn't care whether the farm makes money or not. More and more his villainy is seen to consist merely of this; he becomes identified with the idle rich. As the film ends, the Nazis are invading Poland. The audience has supposedly forgotten the count's happy boar hunting scenes, for we see him now preparing to flee. And as he makes his final exit it is to wistful thin music. The portrait, finally, is that of a broken pathetic man, an ineffectual man who has never been able to catch up with the times. The poet of the family speaks his epitaph: he is of the race of dinosaurs, his kind is dying out. In short, he is not to be taken seriously. As a threat, this dream has quite wished him away, whitewashed him away.

Thus film after film is obedient to a compulsion to clear of any serious censure the big money man, the big breadwinner. The rich household itself is fumed against, but the kingpin of the household is not. Censure of the idle rich, but not of the rich who work for their money, is of course in the Puritan tradition. And it is in this tradition for the millionaire to be identified, as so frequently he is in these films, with the common man. For is he not just that—the common man who has fulfilled himself, who has scaled the ladder of success, who has made good? The successful breadwinner cannot be censured if there is to be a Horatio Alger myth.

But is there a Horatio Alger myth in current films? So far, although films have been examined in which the common man leaves his mark, no films have been examined in which he appreciably advances himself.

In "In Our Time," to be sure, a simple English girl marries a Polish nobleman. But we haven't here the traditional success story, for what this film features is not the simple girl's translation into a lady, but rather the nobleman's translation into the common man—as the film ends the two are in the fields with the peasants, scorching the earth.

What about MGM's box office triumph, "Random Harvest"? A lowly show-girl (Greer Garson) marries an ex-soldier (Ronald Colman), an amnesia victim. They are almost penniless but live happily in a simple little cottage (very adequately furnished by MGM with priceless antiques.) The hero in an accident now suddenly loses all memory of these latest years but regains his earlier memories; he finds that he is a big prince of industry. The heroine searches for him and finds him. She doesn't force herself upon him when he doesn't recognize her; she simply becomes his secretary, and makes herself invaluable, and so becomes his social secretary and then in due course his wife (on a strictly social secretary basis). She waits patiently and then at last one happy day his memory returns, he recognizes her, and she becomes a wife in truth: their love is restored.

Is this not a success story? Note the dream ease with which the lowly show-girl ascends the social ladder—Miss Garson is never shown as having one awkward moment. The hero of course ascends with an even more magic ease; he simply recovers from amnesia.

But it is worth looking very closely at the hero in his role as the prince of industry. Note that when he returns to this life he immediately declares his intention of merely paying off the family debts that have accrued, arranging for his relatives' comfort, and then retiring. Then he finds that many, many small families are dependent for their livelihood upon his remaining in industry, and so he remains, reluctantly. The film does a very careful job

of stressing his nobility. His eye is always out for the little fellow. We see him, for instance, settle a strike—to the utter satisfaction of the strikers, who end by serenading him with "For he's a jolly good fellow!" But the really interesting note in the picture is the wistful note. As he sits in his spacious office, the prince of industry is filled with vague nostalgic yearnings; he dreams dimly of a wife he once had and a life he once had—he can't quite remember, but it was all very sweet, and it took place in a simple little cottage. The dream is a dream of ascending a ladder, but at the top of the ladder the dreamer looks down wistfully and would be back at the first rung if he could. It is not irrelevent that only when chance brings the hero again to the simple little cottage does he recover his memory, and recover his true true love. In fading out on the two standing together at the cottage door, the dream does, in fact, with relief descend the ladder again.

It may be objected that this is reading more into the film than is justified. Of course the industrialist was wistful—he was yearning for Greer Garson; he just happened to have known her in a little cottage, and isn't it perfectly logical that his memory should have returned there, at the scene of their former love? The objection would be valid enough if it were not for the fact that film after film displays the same pattern of ascending and then with relief descending again the social ladder, relinquishing the heights gained.

Two Betty Grable musicals, for example, display this pattern. In "Coney Island" a singer starts out in a Brooklyn honky-tonk, then makes her way up the ladder to Broadway and glamorous productions there, all in subtle Fox technicolor pastels. But once at the top she immediately begins to question the value of what she has gained, she begins to fear that she has really lost something, begins to take cracks at those who wear diamonds and casts a nostalgic eye back at the old beer parlor days. Before the curtain goes down on her first big production, she has managed to slip in as an encore one of the old honky-tonk songs, which she sings not to the "top hats" in the audience but straight at the boy from Brooklyn in his "98-cent skipper"—who, what is more, has

managed to crawl into the orchestra pit to accompany her on the piano. In "Sweet Rosie O'Grady," a show-girl makes her way up the same ladder of success, and becomes engaged to a very, very rich man. Before the wedding ceremony is half way through she has thrown this rich man over and run back into the arms of, again, the poor boy from Brooklyn.

The pattern is included, too, in "Lifeboat," although set there in a rather more complicated and rather more ambiguous total context: Tallulah's worldly goods—all gained the hard way—go overboard one by one, camera, mink coat, typewriter, diamond bracelet; and she is, we gather, temporarily the better for it; she makes for the arms of the ship's stoker, who comes from the wrong side of the tracks in Chicago, which is just where she had her start.

The pattern is to be found even in animated cartoons. In the cartoon "Cilly Goose," a goose lays a very ordinary egg and is not satisfied with it. In a dream she gilds her egg, and gets to be a sensational attraction at Madison Square Garden: she is exhibited with her golden egg to the ecstatic masses. But the dream turns into a nightmare; she is very nearly killed by the stampeding greedy public; she escapes back to the barnyard. There she awakes to find that the ordinary egg she scorned has hatched into a gosling with endearing ways. The film comes to a happy close on the domestic note.

A whole run of cheap productions intended for small theatres in the sticks plays off the dangers and temptations of the career against the safety and morality of domesticity. In "Man of Courage," for example, our hero, a district attorney, gets to be governor,—by virtue, chiefly, of his successful prosecution of a certain case. He then learns that he has sent an innocent woman to jail—his political backer, without his knowledge of course, had bribed one of the witnesses to perjure himself. Our hero resigns as governor, and the film comes to a happy ending as he marries the woman he unjustly jailed and sets up housekeeping with her in the suburbs.

This film introduces a nightmare note that is to be found in

many other films: the possibility that one will in business life sin against another through no volition of one's own, but helplessly —even without knowledge that one is doing so. One is always acting for others, and one is always acting through others, and one is never entirely one's own boss. In a film like "Random Harvest," the noble intentions of the successful career character are carefully—are over-carefully—stressed. Here is suddenly the same coin, but the reverse side of the same coin. And the writing on this side of the coin can be more easily read.

A Universal musical, "Hatcheck Honey," hits the note again. A young singer wants to make Hollywood. His father (an old vaudeville trooper) and his girl make many sacrifices to help him get a start. He begins to make good. His producers order the publicity department "turned loose on him." A hundred thousand dollars is spent on a big build-up. It is decided to sell him to the movie public as the blue-blooded son of a distinguished old family. So when the devoted old vaudeville trooper turns up to visit, he's asked by his son's publicity man please to keep out of the way. He is hurt, the heroine when she hears of it is irate, but the hero feels very sorry for himself—it has been none of his doing.

Especially do current films gravitate toward the subject of the sins against others that result from commercialism; over and over the dream labors to wish away this guilt, to wash the hero clean of it. "True to Life" (Paramount) offers a good example. Two radio writers are supposed to be composing a serial about a simple human girl and her simple human family; but their characters lately have begun to sound fake. The two decide that the $1,000 a week apiece they've been earning has ruined them; they had better "return to the center of things," meet some "real people." One of them, our hero, after some wanderings finds the very family he is after: the girl works in a diner, the father works in a bakery, it's the typical simple American family. So our hero pretends he's a stranger to the town and out of work. They invite him to live with them while he hunts a job. This he does—and reports obediently to his partner what he witnesses there. The

family's daily life is broadcast verbatim. The backers of the serial are delighted: "It's warm, real, human! And what's more it will sell soap!" Our hero falls in love with the girl, and his wooing of her goes into the program too. Then at a certain point the family discovers what has been going on, and is outraged. The girl, of course, is the most outraged.

The dream mechanism by which the film now seeks to extricate the hero from his guilt is a typical one. To add to all the other accusations hurled against him by the entire family, the heroine accuses the hero of making love to her merely to get material for his program. These are the magic words. At these words the whole dream focus is suddenly narrowed sharply; the hero, in effect, begins proclaiming over and over: "When I made love to you, I was on the level, you must believe me! When I made love to you, I was sincere—you do me an injustice!" An elaborate trial of the hero on this score commences—the heroine will not easily be persuaded. But at long last she is persuaded; he stands acquitted. And by the dream magic, the moment he stands acquitted on this score, he appears to stand acquitted of his total guilt—no more questions are asked: the hero is sincere. In the lovers' close-up all worldly guilt is dissolved—the nightmare fades.

This escape is to be distinguished from the escape to the safety of suburban domesticity in a film like "Man of Courage." The hero in "Man of Courage" gives up his post as governor—the dream extricates him from the nightmare world by simply retiring him from it. The hero in "True to Life" does not give up his job in radio—the dream seeks to extricate him without retiring him. It seeks to extricate him by blacking him out in the kiss.

One might say, too, that it seeks to extricate him by blacking him out into the nightmare itself. There is an interesting passage in the film where the backer of the program threatens to fire the hero and his partner, because the family is sueing. The partner suggests that they stay on the air with the program, admit to the public that the charges are true, and with the extra millions of cakes of soap they will be able to sell, because of the publicity,

they will be able to pay off double on the suit. Our hero objects: they have done enough to that family! But then he pauses: if the charges are admitted publicly, the family will be absolutely sure to win its suit. And so he agrees. This way he will be able to repay them for what he has done. The way out of the nightmare is to enter it more deeply.

But once the dream takes this way there is no stopping. The real dream frenzy now ensues. The film has the simple American family embrace notoriety. The house becomes a madhouse, as flocks of sightseers invade, the family screaming after them as they depart: "Don't forget to tell your friends about us!" As the curtains descends, hero and family, reconciled, are assisting each other at a final bang-up public broadcast, which is sure to sell more soap than has ever before been sold through this program; it is a true-to-life broadcast of the heroine's "yes" to the hero. This is the escape the dream has finally pulled off for its hero: as all the characters are in the same world with him now, there is no one to call it amoral.

"True to Life" is a more typical film than "Man of Courage." Film after film, as it does, straddles the dilemma: here is the nightmare world, where human values are distorted, human loyalties betrayed, but here is where one makes one's living.

It is Preston Sturges who has fashioned most ingeniously a dream by which the hero may gain an amoral world, remaining himself moral. The dream depends upon cunning use of the traditional figure of the Inspired Innocent. The hero, an unworldly fellow, a stutterer, a simple soul, does not seek the world—it is handed him. He does not "play it that way"—it comes out that way, in spite of him. When he makes the speech it is to refuse the post of mayor—but the speech gets him the post. He is thinking only of his mother, he is thinking only of the girl he loves, not of his own gain—but the world finds a use for him. This is the pattern in both "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" and "Hail the Conquering Hero." At the end of each film the hero is king of the castle, but has done no pushing; he is exalted upon the dunghill, uncontaminated.

* * *

Are there any films in which the war is dreamed of as a way out of these confusions? Are there any dreams that on the battlefield the nightmare will be dissolved?

"In former wars we haven't always been sure what we were fighting for; but in this war we know; and we are all fighting for the same thing: this is a revolution." A nurse on Bataan is speaking, in MGM's "Cry Havoc."

Revolution? The word is spoken. But I have not quoted her in full (I quote from memory but I think verbatim). She says, actually, without taking breath: "This is a revolution; we are fighting for our lives." Before the sentence is completed, the word is annulled. The girl adds for good measure: "If one of us dies, we all die." (Donne is in style in Hollywood, via Hemingway.)

What do her words signify; what echoes do they find in the war films generally?

The common man is hero in these films too. He is hero singly. Or he is hero in a group—the group is hero. The group contains side by side, carefully, Negro and White, Jew, Catholic and Protestant, rich boy and poor boy, city boy and country boy, the boy who went to school and the boy who did not. "This is America." "If one of us dies, we all die."

What do they seem to be fighting for? They seem to be fighting for the ship. They seem to be fighting for the team. (Frequently these war films echo the old football sagas.) And then many of the men carry in their pockets, or in their helmets, the snapshot of the girl back home, the snapshot of mother. And they talk between battles of Thanksgiving dinners, of the coke at the corner drugstore, of what junior said when he had his first haircut, of Christmas, of the Brooklyn Dodgers. "This is America." "We are fighting for our lives."

But why was the word "revolution" ever spoken? For though annulled within the same sentence, yet for an instant, before fading, there it stood. Why this word, in the dream? In film after

film we see the common man, with a clear untroubled expression on his face, fighting simply to go home to what he has left behind. Are there any who have their doubts about the status quo, who hesitate to join the fight, fearing it is perhaps not their fight?

There are a few scattered films in which the criminal, the social outlaw, refuses for a while to join the fight, objecting: This is not my war.

Mr. Lucky, gambler, in the RKO film "Mr. Lucky," is one of those who objects. "My war was crawling up out of the gutter," he announces. Borrowing the 4F draft card of one of his minions who has "kicked off," he successfully ducks the draft. Mr. Lucky runs into a rich society girl, who is busying herself with war relief. He persuades her to set up a gambling concession at the coming benefit ball. He has a trick up his sleeve by which to corner for himself and his gang the better part of the money spent. By the time the benefit ball comes around, Mr. Lucky has undergone a change of heart; he tells his gang he cannot take this money. But his gang makes him go through with the plan at the point of a gun. When the society girl discovers that she has been exploited, she is in anguish, for she has, naturally, fallen in love with our hero, as he has with her. But soon she can be overjoyed when it turns out that she has misunderstood him: the missing money arrives by special mesenger, and with it word that our hero has joined the Merchant Marine. We see her next, weeks later, waiting at the dock—his ship is returning.

At a superficial glance, here is a film of conversion. But the disguise is thin. The section in which Mr. Lucky endures a "change of heart" is blurred through rapidly, the film playing up, rather, the section in which the heroine, in anguish, doubts him. And where the film, where the dream really can be said to live is in those scenes at the beginning where Mr. Lucky parades for us, in full dress, his cynicism—side-stepping with a grimace, for example, the poster of Uncle Sam, finger levelled: I WANT YOU! A scene such as this can appear on the screen, the dream can pass the censor, because this is a professional gambler and crook behaving this way—an outlaw, not a regular citizen. But look

closely; look again. Examine Mr. Lucky's relationship to the heroine. It is hard to say just where it is that the heroine is supposed to be assisting at Mr. Lucky's conversion. But it is very easy to say where it is that she comes under Mr. Lucky's tutelage. He spends a good deal of the film, for example, teaching her the graces of slang. This is a familiar note. But this is a minor note. One scene in this film is a key scene, if the dream is to be read. The heroine wants something from her grandfather. To bully him, she drives out to the country estate with Mr. Lucky, then, by phone, threatens her grandfather that if he denies her she'll marry this man. She gets what she wants. But now Mr. Lucky rises up and delivers the rich girl an important lecture—he sets her straight about life. Does she think that is the very worst thing that could happen to her, to marry him? He leads her among the family portraits. Before each he stops and asks where the man got his money. From his father before him, he is told. But finally they stop before the portrait of the member of the family who made the original fortune. The money she now enjoys was once made. Why does she think of herself as of a race apart from Mr. Lucky? This ancestor of hers, of whom she is so proud, worked his way up the hard way. Mr. Lucky has done the same. Where is the great difference between them? She can be sure that in the case of her ancestor as well as in his own case, a certain amount of dog-eat-dog went into the making of the money. That is how money is made. The mask falls from our hero: he is the common man. In the final analysis, it is the common man who has said, in this dream: This is not my war.

"Passage to Marseilles" is another film that affords, under dream cover, release for doubts about this war. Again the hero is allowed his moment of announcing that he does not intend to fight. He is one of a group of Frenchmen taken off a raft onto a freighter bound for North Africa. While the ship is still at sea, France falls to the Nazis. The entire group from the raft declares itself in favor of joining the Free French. But at a certain point later on the hero suddenly bursts forth with the announcement that he is interested only in joining his wife and child—

after what his country has done to him, he is not interested in risking his neck for it. Within a few hours of this, to be sure, a Nazi submarine attacks the freighter and our hero is the first to the guns. This dream is more prompt even than "Mr. Lucky" to make itself presentable, to cover over with music the raw note.

But who is it this time who has sounded the note? Who is the hero, and what his disguise? The film progresses within a very complex, often bewildering, framework of narration and flash-back. Identities are only very gradually untangled. We learn first that the group has escaped from a French colonial prison. We learn that one of the group is a murderer, one a pickpocket, one a deserter. Our hero is the accepted leader of the group, and the toughest character among them; we tend rather to think of him as one of the same species. The film never labors the point of his difference from the others; rather late in the film it just evolves casually that he is a former liberal newspaper man, who set up a great yell at the time of Munich, and was railroaded into prison because of that. In "Mr. Lucky" the mask of the criminal allowed the common man to appear and speak his doubts. Here, not precisely behind the mask of the criminal, but in the cloak of the company of criminals, another character is smuggled in, and allowed a few words: the embittered liberal.

In an earlier, and a more well-known film, "Casablanca," essentially the same character is featured. Here too the character is introduced not boldly but in dream disguise. At this point it is pertinent to review for a moment the difficulties in selecting films for their direct truth-to-life. The hero of "Casablanca," Nick, is an American who fought in Spain on the side of the Republic. He has batted around the Continent since. Now he is in Casablanca. The leader of the French underground, trailed by the Nazis, asks his help in getting out of the country—and our hero is not willing to risk his neck to help him. Here, the analyst might say, is an accurate enough portrait for the historian of the liberal who was once full of fight but is now discouraged, has decided to risk his life no longer in a cause he thinks lost. The portrait is there, but as we look it blurs before our eyes. Why will Nick

not help the underground leader? Because the wife of the underground leader once deserted Nick; now he is getting even with her. Not Spain, not anything that has happened in the outer world has made this man bitter: a woman once jilted him. In the end, also, inevitably, our hero does help the underground leader out of the country, and his wife with him. He does so at great risk to his life, and then goes off to join the Free French and fight again. The dream adjusts its mask, the music surges, the original one true shrill note is drowned.

* * *

In these three films, in different guise, the same dream is in effect dreamed over and over. Throughout the rapid survey of films I have attempted this has been seen. Films will again and again, as dreams will, approach the same guilt feeling, trying to erase it, or approach the same anxiety, trying to relieve it, the same yen, trying to indulge it. After examining the films of a period closely, it is possible to constellate them finally, in shifting groups, about certain major pressure points.

In selecting films for the historian, the analyst should be sure that at least one film from each constellation is included. But one film is not always enough. It is only as the analyst, viewing one film after another, comes upon the same dream again and again, that he is apt to become aware of it. And as the dream almost inevitably wears a disguise, it is only as he examinies it in film after film that he is apt to penetrate to its meaning. The historian will be in a comparable position. He should if possible be provided with the same dream in a number of variations. If for technical reasons only a very limited selection of films is possible, then he should be provided with the analyst's interpretation of the films, and detailed reference to the variations of theme in other films not preserved.

Before deciding which are the most vivid examples in the field, the analyst should view the films of the year against the background of films that have been saved from other years. For the

significance of a film dream is highlighted if it features an element that is traditional, but features it in a new fashion; if, for example, its hero is a familiar type that can be seen to have suffered a sea change.

"Mr. Lucky," for example, is particularly signicant if examined in the light of films featuring outlaws in the past. In the past this particular character type was perhaps the object of more or less serious social analysis. Or, more likely, he was featured as the Satanic hero, romantic rebel against society. In "Mr. Lucky" he is neither of these. In "Mr. Lucky" his identity is blurred with another identity; he stands no longer as society's outlaw but as the very common denominator of society—he stands for the common man. Contrasting his present role with the role he used to play, it is impossible not to ask: why his translation? Why has the mask of the outlaw been appropriated by the common man? The disguise is not an irrelevant one, I think. If we examine the common man, in one current film after another—whether behind the mask of outlaw or not—we find that he is in an ambiguous position: his status in society is never quite clear, his stakes in society are never quite clear. It is hard to say in the end quite where he lives or what he values. So the disguise is relevant. For he is a citizen, but he is a citizen without a vision of a city—he is citizen but he is also outlaw.

His plight is clearer, again, if he is studied in relation to other heroes of past films—if he is studied, for example, in relation to a more direct forebear: the success boy, the Horatio Alger. In former films we saw the hero make his way up the steep social ladder by the serength of his bright talents; at the end of the film the poor boy was a rich boy, the humble maid was a lady—and well pleased. But in current films we see the hero, when he has reached the top, either with relief retreat again or, remaining, blink an anxious eye at values lost along the way. We see the hero no longer briskly making his own way, the bright-browed self-made man. We see him instead disclaiming responsibility for having arrived where he has arrived; we see him denying that his life has been in his own hands; we see his playing helpless,

playing the babe in the woods. We see, in fact, at a certain point, one director, Sturges, making cunning use of the traditional figure of the Innocent to pull off this success story that has become difficult to pull off. A Sturges film provides a very good example of a film that is significant particularly in its relation to films of the past. The character played by Eddie Bracken in "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" and in "Hail the Conquering Hero" bears a decided resemblance to an early Harry Langdon or Buster Keaton character. Yet the role of this character has been essentially reversed. In the earlier films the Innocent either converted the wicked world to his own ways or with a fine disdain turned his back upon it. But in a Sturges film the Innocent gains the world, succeeds according to the wicked world's own terms.

There is one particular reason why it is good for the analyst, before he makes his selections for the historian, to look back at the films of the past. The analyst encounters many films he would be inclined to pass over quickly, as empty formulae, routine matters, able to tell the historian little: they do not seem to spring from any live dream pressures. Most Westerns today, for example, are of this kind. But the point is that one of these films may, in conjunction with an example of the same genre in the past, make a special point to the historian, may dramatize for him the death of the values by which the original had its life—prove lively just as a scene of death. In the early Westerns very often it was the founding of a new community that was at stake; the hero's role was to make it safe for the settlers. At the beginning of a modern Western the hero will frequently mouthe the old familiar phrases about the birth of a bright new West, and a chance for the "decent folks," but as the film progreses, any such supposed stakes that have been set up can be seen casually to evaporate. In the middle of the film we are are likely as not to see the settlers featured as the chief opposition he has to deal with. Those originally characterized as the "decent folks" are now all of a sudden characterized as silly morons or as vicious rabble who set at a hazard our hero's life. The skin of our hero is, in fact, the only thing it is ever safe to assume will be at stake for any dura-

tion. It is significant that the hero is rarely, any longer, a member of the community in which he performs his marvels. He is perhaps a federal agent, or he is agent for an insurance company in some distant town (anxious to know why it is having to pay out so much); or it may be that he is simply Roy Rogers or Gene Autry, the movie star himself, arrived out of the great blue to perform justice. It is because he no longer lives anywhere in particular, is no longer agent for the establishment of any clear order of things, that the modern Western hero is obliged to exert himself so painfully to endear himself as a Personality. As nothing else is at stake, he must labor at least to make us fear lest *He* be destroyed, and thus prevented from returning to us, to go through his tricks for us again, same time, next week.

The outlaw, the success boy, the Innocent, the Western hero—all these traditional heroes have undergone serious alteration. What has altered them is, quite clearly, that their relation to society has been altered. Heroes are born of a certain vision of society; if that vision is altered, they alter. The modern hero is a hero of wavering outlines. He has pulled down upon himself the heroes of the past; he assumes for a while the color of one of these and then another—but the colors blur. His nature is chameleon. He is no longer very sure what he is, because he is no longer very sure where he lives.

The few current films which seem able to integrate their material, to pull off any sort of style, are those which, with the detachment of cynicism, improvise upon this very sense of a world no longer sure in outline. These films are in a special sense worth the historian's notice.

Animated cartoons, although seldom works of art, yet demonstrate a freedom of invention that distinguishes them from most current films. And it is exactly with the theme of a disordered world that they play. Most describe a crescendo: they begin by exaggerating the laws of physics, distort them gradually more and more, then at a certain point abandon them altogether for anarchy. A cartoon today frequently ends in an explosion. Or it may end simply by interrupting itself. One animal has a knife raised

above another animal, to dine on him. The victim squeaks impertinently: "You can't kill me now; this is the end of the film"—which it is. A cartoon today loves to spill one realm of reality into another. A character is watching himself perform upon a movie screen. Suddenly the image on the screen steps out into the room; screen character and real-life character start chasing each other about; and which is which one can't say. Or the figures in a dream invade the waking life of the dreamer. In a manner that is related, cartoon characters frequently step outside the bounds of the play to announce to us slyly their unreality. "I'm Bugs Bunny of Warner Brothers Studios" this character will comment, in the middle of the action proper. And the stiff little figure of Superman, a character who has always taken himself very solemnly, has been succeeded now by Mighty Mouse, who never for a moment believes in his own existence, pulls off everything with a great big wink.

There is a brand of musical extravaganza now in fashion that functions slickly by this same technique of the wink. *Time* Magazine has coined a good phrase for such films: they "kid their cheese-cake and have it too." "Road to Morocco" was such a film. "Up In Arms" is another. In "Up In Arms," for example, two soldiers stand on the upper deck of a transport, gazing down upon the lower deck where a bevy of beautiful nurses sunbathe in full technicolor. "There was never anything like this in the last war," says the first soldier. "There isn't anything like it in this war, either," the other soldier sighs.

Preston Sturges comes as close as anyone in Hollywood right now to pulling off a style in his films, and, as remarked, his entire game is to present us with a world, then demolish this world for us, then hand it back to us again intact, with a wicked leer.

It may be recalled, in conclusion, that the scene in "Lifeboat" which, of all the film, came most to life, was that one played not against the usual cloud-shifting lively sky, but against a blank sky, a white white backdrop, a void.

Many of these films are at the farthest remove from either the literal presentation of events or the topical. Yet it is perhaps

these films which will tell the historian most. For it is these—the films which, more than most, have found an orientation among the sensed realities of the time—that demonstrate most vividly what we are able to believe in today. We are, for the moment, not sure where we live.

NOTE: I want to acknowledge a friendly debt to the critic, Siegfried Kracauer, for many of the thoughts expressed in this paper have crystallized after conversations with him. B. D.

About The Contributors

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From *My Friend's Life* 1914

by Alexander Blok

Translated by Gareth Endor

The day passed, as always:
In quiet insanity.
Others round about were talking
Of illnesses, drugs and physicians.
One friend talked about his job,
Another—about Christ,
A fourth—about the daily paper.
Two versifiers (admirers of Pushkin)
Sent in little volumes
In a multitude of rhymes and meters.
A school-girl sent in a manuscript
With a mass of epigraphs
(Out of Nadson and the Symbolists).
Later—while the telephone rang and rang—
A messenger delivered an envelope
Scented with unfamiliar perfume.
In the note was written:
Have roses on the table—
And there was nothing for it but to have them
on the table. . . .
Still later a fellow scribe,
Immersed to the eyes in his beard,
Held forth at length
On the keening of the southern Croats.
A critic, rumbling about futurism,
Spurned symbolism
And ended up with realism.
In the evening in the movie
A distinguished baron kissed, beneath a palm-tree,

A girl of humble station,
Raising her to his level. . . .

All of this was in exquisite order.

Late at night he fell fast asleep
And awoke in another land.
Not the morning chill,
Nor his friend's words,
Nor the lady's roses,
Nor the futurist manifesto,
Nor the Pushkinist verses,
Nor the dogs' barking,
Nor the carts' creaking,—
Nothing, nothing
Could recall him to the world. . . .

And what, indeed, will you do
If the exquisite order
Of the dear old everyday world
Is in dreams at times submerged
And much is dreamed in those dreams . . . .
And in them all is not always,
As in the world, in such exquisite order . . . .

No, there are times when you awake
Disturbed and shaken
By dim remembrances,
Mysterious presentiments . . . .
In the brain tumultuously throb
Thoughts too radiant . . . .
And, subduing their tumult,
As though frightened of something,—
Is it not better,
You think, that the new day too
Pass, as always:
In quiet insanity?

III. Selections: *Gaspard de la Nuit*

By Louis Bertrand

Translated, and with a Note by

WILLIAM TROY

Note: This is the third in a series of articles dealing with European writers who are less well known here than they deserve to be.

Although unmentioned by Verlaine in his little book on the *poetes maudits* of the nineteenth century, Louis (Aloysius) Bertrand was surely among the first to set the pattern, both in his life and work, for what has been perhaps the most important tradition in modern poetry. Like his close contemporaries Novalis and Hölderlin in Germany, Blake in England, and Poe in America, he was one of those "born with a little ray of moonlight in their brains," and doomed to suffer the consequences in a society so much attracted to the daylight in its general outlook. Born in 1807, at Ceva, in the Piedmont, of an Italian mother and a father from Lorraine, he spent his youth in Dijon, where he was caught up in the second wave of the French revolutionary movement, writing much for the local papers. At twenty-one, with the usual cargo of manuscripts, he made the classic descent upon the capital, and for a time enjoyed the patronage of the great Sainte-Beuve. But very soon he was forced to return to Dijon, where he lived out the few years that remained in fever and starvation. Picked up in the streets in a half-dead condition, he was taken to a hospital, and shortly afterwards followed to his grave by a single mourner, the painter David D'-

Angers, who has left a beautiful death-mask. It is of course the now almost banal saga of the poet in our age. But this should not cause us to neglect his memory so completely as has been the case—even in his own country.

"I've a little confession to make to you," writes Baudelaire to a friend. "It's in browsing through, for at least the twentieth time, the famous *Gaspard de la Nuit* of Aloysius Bertrand . . . that the idea has come to me of attempting something analogous, and of applying it to the description of modern life." Elsewhere, Baudelaire refers to the book as the "mysterious and brilliant model" of his own more famous *Petits Poèmes en Prose*. We happen to know also that it was among the handful of books owned by Isadore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), and a comparison with *Les Chants de Maldoror* is much in order. Rimbaud was undoubtedly familiar with it when he wrote *Les Illuminations*, as any comparison of *Le Deuxième Homme* (here translated) with *Après le Deluge** would show. Not only is it the style and imagery that are alike but the wide cosmological vision. And, in a more general way, Bertrand introduces that note of disingenuous self-depreciation, that systematic mockery of traditional romantic symbols, which is the stock-in-trade of Laforgue and Corbière, and which through them has passed into so much contemporary English and American verse. But all such talk of influences is bound to be tiresome; for there is the book itself, which is not quite like anything else.

A loose collection of prose poems, vignettes, dialogues, and semi-serious diatribes, its sole unity is that of attitude—an attitude bred out of the collision of the Latin intelligence with the Northern sensibility. Everywhere the intelligence at work—brittle, curious, often perverse—is recognizably within the main tradition of French classicism. But the world of objects is glimpsed through the heavy fogs and mists of the North; everything is blurred by a crepuscular haze (*La Pluie*) or distorted by the antics of a waggish moon. Here are three strophes from a poem entitled *Le Cheval Mort*:

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* See *Chimera*, Vol. II, No. 4

Each night, when the moon has blanched the heavens, this carcass takes flight, bestridden by a witch who spurs him on with the pointed bone of her heel, the cold wind making a bellows of his cavernous flanks.

And if there should be at this quiet hour one sleepless eye, awakened in some corner of the final resting-place, it would close abruptly for fear of seeing a specter in the stars.

Already the moon herself, with blinking eye, no longer gleams except to give the light of a floating candle to this dog, scrawny vagabond, drinking water from a puddle.

From German romanticism, with its dark burden of folk-balladry and Gothicism, Bertrand derives his landscape of desolate swamps and perilous forests, his interest in witchcraft and necromancy, his delight in the rich paraphernalia of the grave. All these skulls, vultures, gallows-trees—how they must have appealed to the more serious genius of Baudelaire! For it will be quite evident that in Bertrand they are hardly more than objects for exorcism on the part of a humorous if unhappy mind. Certainly, with Nerval, Bertrand restored *mystery* to French poetry. He was among the first to brew that mixture of French classicism and German romanticism to which today we are fond of giving the name Symbolism. But it is the very difficulty of the process that supplies the unique quality of his work. Not only is it his subject but the real basis of his pose or attitude.

Fantaisies à la Manière de Rembrandt et de Caillot: this is the sub-title which Bertrand gave to his book. Much might be written about the effects on poetry of the popular engravings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although here Bertrand does not actually set down his poems side-by-side with illustrative engravings, as did Blake, he does mean us to respond to certain of them, like *Clair de Lune* and *Le Gibet*, as to a picture. What we get is a handful of highly selected images, recorded separately and with a minimum of statement or comment. (We will recall that it was a misunderstanding of the English word "illumination," which he believed to mean "illuminated manuscripts," that caused Rimbaud to designate his later efforts in the same line as "Illuminations.") In explanation, we may suggest that this is part of the attempt to bring back to poetry

some of the precision of word and image that had been lost in the high tide of the romantic movement.

Unfortunately, the so-called prose-poem is no less forbidding to the translator than the poem in meter; in fact, the difficulty is increased in exact proportion to the greater rhythmical and syntactical flexibility of the former. No translation of writing so deeply grounded in the natural genius of a language, as is the best of Bertrand, can provide much more than the husks. But better these husks perhaps than the obloquy that still dogs his name.

* * *

I

LE CLAIR DE LUNE

Reveillez-vous, gens qui dormez
Et priez pour les trépassés.
—*Le cri du crieur de nuit.*

Oh! qu'il est doux, quand l'heure tremble au clocher, la nuit, de regarder la lune qui a le nez fait comme un carolus d'or!

* * *

Deux ladres se lamentaient sous ma fenêtre, un chien hurlait dans le carrefour, et le grillon de mon foyer vaticinait tout bas.

Mais bientôt mon oreille n'interrogea plus qu'un silence profond. Les lépreux étaient rentrés dans leurs chenils, aux coups de Jacquemart qui battait sa femme.

Le chien avait enfilé une venelle, devant les pertuisanes du guet enrouillé par la pluie et morfondu par la bise.

Et le grillon s'était endormi, dès que la dernière bluette avait éteint sa dernière lueur dans la cendre de la cheminée.

Et moi, il me semblait, —tant la fièvre est incohérente!. —que la lune, grimant sa face, me tirait la langue comme un pendu!

I

MOONLIGHT

Awake, all ye who slumber on,
And pray for those dead and gone.
—*Night-cryer's Cry*

Oh, how sweet it is at night, when the hour trembles in the belfry, to contemplate the moon with its nose like a golden Carolus!

* * *

Two lepers groaned beneath my window, a dog howled at the cross-roads, and the cricket on my hearth made prophecy with a low sound.

But soon my ear questioned no more than a profound silence. The lepers had returned to their hovels, under the blows of Jacquemart, who was beating his wife.

The dog had beaten a hasty retreat, before the halberds of the watchman rusted by the rain and chilled by the wind.

And the cricket had fallen asleep, as soon as the last ember had stifled its last glow in the ashes of the hearth.

As for me, it seemed—so incoherent is fever—that the moon, wrinkling her face, was sticking her tongue out at me like a hanged man!

II

ENCORE UN PRINTEMPS

Toutes les pensées, toutes
les passions qui agitent
le coeur mortel sont les
esclaves de l'amour.

—Coleridge

Encore un printemps, —encore une goutte de rosée, qui se bercera un moment dans mon calice amer, et qui s'en échappera comme une larme!

O ma jeunesse, tes joies ont été glacées par les baisers du temps, mais tes douleurs ont survécu au temps qu'elles ont étouffé sur leur sein.

Et vous qui avez parfilé la soie de ma vie, ô femmes! s'il y a eu dans mon roman d'amour quelqu'un de trompeur, ce n'est pas moi, quelqu'un de trompé, ce n'est pas vous!

O printemps! petit oiseau de passage, notre hôte d'une saison qui chante mélancoliquement dans le coeur du poète et dans la ramée du chêne!

Encore un printemps, —encore un rayon du soleil de mai au front du jeune poète, parmi le monde, au front du vieux chêne, parmi les bois!

II

YET ONE MORE SPRING

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but min[illegible]ers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

—Coleridge

Yet one more spring—one more dewdrop, which will lull itself a moment in my bitter calyx, and then vanish from it like a tear!

O my youth, thy joys have been frozen by the lips of Time, but thy sorrows have outlasted Time, which they have smothered on their breast.

And you who have unravelled the silk of my life, O women, if there has been in my love-tale someone deceiving, it is not I, someone deceived, it is not you!

O spring, little bird of passage, our guest of a season who sings with melancholy in the heart of the poet and in the boughs of the oak!

Yet one more spring—one more gleam of May sunlight on the brow of the young poet, in the midst of the world, on the brow of the old oak-tree, in the midst of the wood!

III

LA PLUIE

Pauvre oiseau que le ciel bénit!
Il écoute le vent bruire,
Chante, et voit des gouttes d'eau luire
Comme des perles dans son nid!

—Victor Hugo

Et pendant que ruisselle la pluie, les petits charbonniers de la Fôret-Noire entendent, de leur lit de fougère parfumée, hurler au dehors la bise comme un loup.

Ils plaignent la biche fugitive que relancent les fanfares de l'orage, et l'écureuil tapi au creux d'un chêne, qui s'épouvante de l'éclair comme de la lampe du chasseur des mines.

Ils plaignent la famille des oiseaux, la bergeronnette qui n'a que son aile pour abriter sa couvée, et le rouge-gorge dont la rose, ses amours, s'effeuille au vent.

Ils plaignent jusqu'au ver luisant qu'une goutte de pluie précipite dans des océans d'un rameau de mousse.

Ils plaignent le pèlerin attardé qui rencontre le roi Pialus et la reine Wilberta, car c'est l'heure où le roi mène boire son palefroi de vapeurs au Rhin.

Mais ils plaignent surtout les enfants fourvoyés qui se seraient engagés dans l'étroit sentier frayé par une troupe de voleurs, ou qui se dirigeraient vers la lumière lointaine de l'ogresse.

Et le lendemain, au point du jour, les petits charbonniers trouvèrent leur cabane de ramée, d'où ils pipaient les grives, couchée sur le gazon et leurs gluaux noyés dans la fontaine.

III

RAIN

Poor bird by heaven blest!
Hearing the rustling wind,
He sings and watches the rain
Glisten like pearls in his nest!

—Victor Hugo

And all the while the rain streams down the little charcoal-burners of the Black Forest listen, from their bed of scented fern, to the wind howling outside like a wolf.

They are sorry for the fleeing hind started again by the fanfares of the storm, and for the squirrel cowering in the hollow of an oak, frightened by the lightning as by the charcoal-hunter's lamp.

They are sorry for the family of the birds, the wagtail, who has only her wing to shelter her brood, and the redbreast whose rose, his beloved, is unleaved in the wind.

They are sorry even for the glow-worm whom a raindrop precipitates into the oceans of a moss-branch.

They are sorry for the tardy pilgrim who runs into King Piaulus and Queen Wilberta, for it is the hour when the king leads his palfrey of vapors to drink in the Rhine.

But they are sorry most of all for the little lost children, who must have got entangled in the narrow foot-trail through fear of a band of robbers, or turned their steps toward the faraway lamp of the ogress.

And the next day, at sunrise, the little charcoal-burners found their bowery cabin, from which they used to entice the thrushes, lying on the ground and their lime-traps drowned in the fountain.

IV

THE GIBBET

> What do I see stirring around
> this gibbet?
>
> —Faust

Ah, this that I hear, would it be the howl of the wintry night-wind or the sigh of the hanged man on the forked gibbet?

Would it be the song of some cricket cowering in the moss and withered ivy with which out of pity the wood has shod itself?

Would it be some sporting house-fly sounding his horn around these ears deaf to the fanfare of the Hoicks?

Would it be some beetle plucking in his uneven flight a single bloody hair on the bald skull?

Or rather would it be some spider weaving a half-ell of muslin as a cravat for this strangled throat?

It is the tolling of a bell in the walls of a town, beneath the horizon, and the carcass of a hanged man burnished by the setting sun.

IV

LE GIBET

Que vois-je remuer autour
de ce gibet?

—Faust

Ah! ce que j'entends, serait-ce la bise nocturne qui glapit, ou le pendu qui pousse un soupir sur la fourche patibulaire?

Serait-ce quelque grillon qui chante tapi dans la mousse et le lierre stérile dont par pitié se chausse le bois?

Serait-ce quelque mouche en chasse sonnant du cor autour de ces oreilles sourdes à la fanfare des hallalis?

Serait-ce quelque escarbot qui cueille en son vol inégal un cheveu sanglant à son crâne chauve?

Ou bien serait-ce quelque araignée qui brode une demi-aune de mousseline pour cravate à ce col étrangle?

C'est la cloche qui tinte aux murs d'une ville, sous l'horizon, et la carcasse d'un pendu que rougit le soleil couchant.

V

LE DEUXIEME HOMME

Et nunc, Domine, tolle, quaeso,
animam meam a me, quia melior
est mihi mors quam vita.

—*Jonas*, Cap. IV, v. 3

J'en jure par la mort dans un monde pareil,
Non, je ne voudrais pas rajeunir d'un soleil.

—Alph. de Lamartine.—*Méditations*

Enfer!—Enfer et paradis! —cris de désespoir! cris de joie!—blasphèmes des réprouvés! concerts des élus! —âmes des morts, semblables aux chênes de la montagne déracinés par les démons! âmes des morts semblables aux fleurs de la vallée cueillies par les anges!

Soleil, firmament, terre et homme, tout avait commencé, tout avait fini. Une voix secoua le néant. —"Soleil! appela cette voix, du seuil de la radieuse Jérusalem." —"Soleil! répétèrent les échos de l'inconsolable Josaphat." —Et le soleil ouvrit ses cils d'or sur le chaos des mondes.

Mais le firmament pendait comme un lambeau d'étendard. —"Firmament! appela cette voix, du seuil de la radieuse Jérusalem." —"Firmament! répétèrent les échos de l'inconsolable Josaphat." —Et le firmament déroula aux vents ses plis de pourpre et d'azur.

Mais la terre voguait à la dérive comme un navire foudroyé qui ne porte dans ses flancs que des cendres et des ossements. —"Terre! appela cette voix, du seuil de la radieuse Jérusalem."—"Terre! répétèrent les échos de l'inconsolable Josaphat."— Et la terre ayant jeté l'ancre, la nature s'assit, couronnée de fleurs, sous le porche des montagnes, aux cent mille colonnes.

Mais l'homme manquait à la création, et tristes étaient la terre et la nature, l'une de l'absence de son roi, l'autre de l'absence de son époux. —"Homme! appela cette voix, du seuil de la radieuse Jérusalem." — "Homme! répétèrent les échos de l'incon-

solable Josaphat." — Et l'hymne de délivrance et de grâces ne brisa point le sceau dont la mort avait plombé les lèvres de l'homme endormi pour l'eternité dans le lit du sépulcre.

—"Ainsi soit-il! dit cette voix, et le seuil de la radieuse Jérusalem se voila de deux sombres ailes." — "Ainsi soit-il! répétèrent les échos, et l'inconsolable Josaphat se remit à pleurer." — Et la trompette de l'archange sonna d'abîme en abîme, tandis que tout croulait avec un fracas et une ruine immenses: le firmament, la terre et le soleil, faute de l'homme, cette pierre angulaire de la création.

V

THE SECOND MAN

> And now, Lord, I beseech Thee, take my breath from me, because better to me is death than life.
>
> —*Jonas*, IV, v. 3

> I swear by death in such a world,
> No, I would not grow younger by a sun.
>
> A. de Lamartine.—*Meditations*

Hell! Hell and paradise—cries of despair, cries of joy—blasphemies of the damned, choirs of the Elect—souls of the dead like mountain-oaks uprooted by demons, souls of the dead like valley-flowers plucked by angels!

Sun, firmament, earth and man, all had begun, all ended. A voice shattered the void. "Sun!" called this voice, from the threshold of Jerusalem the Radiant. "Sun!" repeated the echoes of Jehoshaphat the Inconsolable. And the sun opened its golden eyelashes upon the chaos of the worlds.

But the firmament hung like a tattered banner. "Firmament!" called this voice, from the threshold of Jerusalem the Radiant. "Firmament!" repeated the echoes of Jehoshaphat the Inconsolable. And the firmament unfurled to the winds its draperies of purple and azure.

But the earth sailed adrift like a thunder-struck ship that carries but ashes and bones in its hold. "Earth!" called this voice, from the threshold of Jerusalem the Radiant. "Earth!" repeated the echoes of Jehoshaphat the Inconsolable. And earth having cast anchor, nature sat, crowned with flowers, beneath the portico of the mountains, with its hundred thousand columns.

But man was lacking in creation, and sad were earth and nature, the one for her absent king, the other for her absent spouse. "Man!" called this voice, from the threshold of Jerusalem the Radiant. "Man!" repeated the echoes of Jehoshaphat the Inconsolable. And the hymn of deliverance and thanksgiving broke not the seal with which death had stopped the lips of man asleep for eternity in his sepulchral bed.

"Amen!" said this voice, and the threshold of Jerusalem the Radiant veiled itself with two somber wings. "Amen!" repeated the echoes, and Jehoshaphat the Inconsolable began to weep. And the trumpet of the archangel sounded from chasm to chasm, while everything tumbled with an enormous crash into ruin: the firmament, the earth and the sun, because of man, that cornerstone of creation.

The Appointed Hour

By Philip Van Doren Stern

THEY had him cornered, driven into the rock-hewn air-raid shelter that was his last refuge. Paratroopers had landed on the mountain top during the morning; the few guards left alive were fighting desperately to hold them off. Even through the solid rock he could hear heavy explosions. The electricity had gone off several hours ago, and only a single tiny bulb burned on, fed by the battery current one of his technicians had cleverly installed. Fortunately, the explosive charge that would blow up the entrance to the shaft was wired to the same battery system. He had only to throw the little switch locked away in a drawer of his desk to bring thousands of tons of rock crashing down upon him. Then he would be sealed forever in the heart of the mountain he had chosen as his refuge and sepulchre.

Here would be a tomb worthy of him—the sort of monument Napoleon or Genghis Khan might have planned for themselves. Legends would spring up about the place. For centuries to come, peasants passing the mountain would say: "There in its heart *he* lies buried." And then they would whisper that he was not dead, but waiting, like Barbarossa, to return some day to make Germany great again and complete his conquest of the world. A new Wagner might arise to celebrate the glory of the legend. And there might even be some truth to this idea, he told himself. Surely he could not be expected to die like a common mortal.

A rapid series of earth-shaking explosions resounded overhead, and then a long silence. Every minute counted now. He

took a key from his pocket and nervously unlocked the desk. The switch, made of solid gold, came into view. He stood for a moment, examining it, awed by the thought of what it could accomplish. Tomorrow the newspapers of the world would blazon forth their headlines. . . .

Names of cities began to run through his mind—Munich, where he had outwitted the stupid English; Vienna, which had fallen without resistance to his will; Warsaw, the devastated; Brussels, captured nearly intact; Rotterdam, bombed almost out of existence; Paris, overrun by his troops; ancient Athens; the fair cities of the northern countries, his victories all. Then he thought of London, standing defiant among her ruins; of the cities beyond the ocean, all of which he had hoped to conquer. He cursed them, and he cursed the names of the Russian cities which had withstood his might, especially Stalingrad, where the Russian hordes had turned back his armies. Moscow beckoned, the rich prize ever beyond his grasp, her turrets and battlements shining in the cold northern sun. Napoleon had ravished and burned her, but if his own troops had taken her he would have ordered them to level her walls to the ground.

How near he had come to seizing the entire world! The big globe he had brought down into the chamber caught his attention, and he spun it madly, gazing at it like a fascinated child as it whirled around on its axis, its multi-colored countries blending in a confused blur.

The swiftly revolving sphere had an almost hypnotic effect. For a moment he felt that he could impose his will upon it, that it would keep on spinning forever, and stave off time and destiny. They had said he could work miracles. Desperately he wanted to bring one about now. But the globe slowed down in its turning, and came silently to a stop.

Hurt and disappointed, he left it and sat down limply in an armchair. Everything seemed strangely quiet. Suddenly he sprang up, on the alert. Footsteps sounded in the passageway, where all were forbidden to go unless announced beforehand on the battery-operated telephone. He went noiselessly to the desk

and stood there, his hand poised over the golden switch-key, while he watched the door intently.

It opened. In the dim light of the single bulb he could see a tall, bearded figure, dressed in the gaberdine he himself had decreed all Jews must wear.

It was impossible that such a creature could penetrate the heart of his mountain fastness. Perhaps it was a figment from his dreams.

The intruder stepped into the room. "This is the appointed hour," he said, "and I have come."

The cornered man's face twisted with sudden fury. This was some filthy trick his generals were playing on him, he thought wildly. He strode toward the motionless figure, threatening it with his automatic pistol.

"Put away your weapons," the Jew said calmly. "You will never use them again. You are now among the defenseless ones who must meet disaster unarmed."

The pistol clicked frantically, futilely, harmlessly. Then it was hurled across the room. It struck the Jew in the face, making a deep gash, but he did not wince or move. While the blood ran down into his mouth, he said something softly in Hebrew.

As if understanding the alien tongue, his assailant opened eyes wide with fear. Then he swung about and ran to the desk, jamming his hand down on the golden key. Nothing happened. He pounded the key frantically, but it was obvious that it was dead.

"I told you your weapons were useless. There is no escape—except the escape I offer you. I have come to tell you that you will not die."

A queer look came into the eyes of the man at the desk.

"No, you will not die," the bleeding lips said. "That privilege is withheld from you. You will long for death and seek it eagerly but it will be denied you—as it has long been denied me."

"Who are you?" The frightened voice rose to a scream. "Who are you?"

"You believe in legends," the Jew went on imperturbably. "You even wanted to become one. Well, you shall have your

wish." He drew himself up to his full height, the blood streaming down unnoticed. "I am Ahasuerus," he announced. "For nearly two thousand years I have been condemned to wander across this earth, forbidden to die until I could find a man whose crime equalled mine. Now I have found him. My burden is now yours, and I can at last have peace."

A terrific explosion reverberated overhead, making the rock walls tremble. The single bulb went out, and the two men were left facing each other in the dark.

The voice continued in rolling periods as though it were pronouncing a sentence. "You shall walk the earth as a Jew, despised and outcast, suffering from the hatred you unloosed against my people for so long as that hatred shall last. The storms will lash you and the sun beat down on you, and you will know neither rest nor sleep. You shall be compelled to wander wherever there are men, and meet cruelty and torment at their hands through crowded cities and small towns, across the fields and forests, the mountains and the deserts of the earth. And you shall see the world repudiate the things for which you stood. You shall see your name reviled, then slowly forgotten and finally obliterated. The works of your hand shall perish; the ideas spawned from your brain will die, but you will not die until you have witnessed the passing of the evil you brought upon mankind. So be it."

Shots were fired outside in the passage, and lights flashed on. Soldiers rushed through the doorway with machine guns and searchlights.

The room they entered was empty. A uniform lay scattered near the desk; there were drops of blood on the carpet, and a pistol, which was in perfect working order with all its cartridges intact.

The Death of Virgil

SOME COMMENTS ON THE BOOK BY HERMANN BROCH

By Paul Rosenfeld

ANOTHER literary dispute is imminent. It will rage over *The Death of Virgil*, a remarkable new novel, a massive sort of poem in prose; the most lyrical, musical, operatic expressions of profound experience in fiction since the later novels of Joyce.* The author is Hermann Broch, an Austrian known to English readers through the translation of his trilogy *The Sleepwalkers*. These novels were distinguished by their extraordinarily full presentation of states of consciousness and of psychic and spiritual growth. Their junior has appeared in an English version worthy of it, the work of a well-known American poet Jean Starr Untermeyer. Her scrupulously faithful translation is a piece of literature which amazingly preserves the flowing lyricism of the original and the warmth, softness and glamour of its mood. The publication of the German text will follow.

Startingly, the book is characteristic of the present period and at the same time a notable expression of a feeling somewhat unfamiliar to us. Its modernity flows from the fullness and intricacy with which it represents the recent cerebral or idealistic trend in life. Like the novels of Proust, Gide and Joyce the grand symbol of *The Death of Virgil* is the action of a mind, a quick, intense and active one. This mind flows swellingly into and about its circumstances, imitating and appraising them, passionately living the entire scene and spectacle, the sky, the people, the earth. Even more fully than in Proust, far more than in Joyce, Broch's symbol is a thinking and reflecting agent. Ideas form the center

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* New York: Pantheon Books. $5.50.

of its interest. Fervently, almost as though under compulsion, the protagonist of *The Death of Virgil* seeks to grasp the essence of whatever lies before him and is enticed by what lies behind the appearance of space. His ideas mingle with his sensibility. He inspects his own reflections and theoretical views of himself. These again and again are expresed in a symbolism that originated with Freud; and the expression of the mind's depths, frequent in the work, has been facilitated by the exploitation of a rich style musicalized in the modern fashion.

The unfamiliar feeling in *The Death of Virgil* is that of Romanticism, particularly of German Romanticism. Historically this is the feeling of the unison and infinity of life; its eternal movement, transformation, becoming; its continual self-fragmentation in the multiplicity of forms for the purpose of self-rejuvenation through their restless destruction. Connected with this feeling is a desire for complete mergence in Life's unison and infinitude through boundary-bursting release from form, in love, ecstasy or death. It is a desire to swing in the great sway of things, to sound as a tone in their unending melody, to flow like a wave in their stream. (Connected with it also is the sense of having incurred guilt and a wound in the world.) In instances this feeling and yearning merge with Christianity, in others with the cult of Dionysus. The reason is that Christianity and the cult of Dionysus both proclaim the infinitude of the human soul. Because night appears to abolish the boundaries of things, to cause them to merge, it is one of the major symbols of Romantic feeling and wish: "*Mondbeglaenzte Zaubernacht*"—magical moon-burnished Night! Night also seems to make infinite voices of things and the whole world a secret flowing song; and another of Romanticism's great symbols is rapturous, dithyrambic music, endless surging melody, the drunken song of infinite Life.

We meet this Romantic feeling in the exceedingly long sentences which fill *The Death of Virgil*. Stretching their lengths they convey emotion that is apparently unwilling or unable to complete itself, continuously growing in intensity and depth, in-

exhaustibly reaching for further expression. We meet the feeling again in the rhapsodic movement of the prose that, coming in waves, sometimes attains an ecstatic elevation of pitch like that of odes or other kinds of hymnic and choral poetry. And it is in the emotive and beglamoured tone, the glowing, humorless, sometimes languishing mood. Most plainly we meet it in the book's motif, the mentality of a rover without a goal in the world, an unhappy ardently yearning man, filled with desire for death and unity with infinite life: like the Tristan and the Amfortas of Wagner, mortally sick with a malady that is symbolic, a dying outwards from within the soul. This protagonist is the poet Virgil. Broch thus is the fourth author to have borrowed the name and figure of the poet of the *Aeneid* for the purpose of fiction. (The other three are the 14th Century Fleming Jean d'Outremeuse, the author of a completely fantastic Life of Virgil, *The Mirror of Stories*; Dante, of course, who clad one of the major persons of his glorious "ethico-politico-theological romance" with Virgil's name and figure; and the unknown author of a French romance popular into the 16th Century, *The Marvelous Deeds of Virgil.*)

Majestically the adventure of Broch's rover begins with the arrival of the galleys of Caesar Augustus in Brundisium. On one of the duodecaremes lies the poet of the *Aeneid.* His unfinished epic lies in a coffer beside him; and "death's signet is graved upon his brow." He had wandered off to Athens. Now Augustus is dragging him back to Rome. The company aboard the galley resembles the greedy human cargo of a modern luxury liner but even more the bestial entourage of Herr Goering. A yearning which at first he takes to be longing for his natal village seizes the dying man, and dreaming of "a single life-moment enlarged to eternity, enlarged to the limits of understanding, susceptible of immensity," he stares into the fading light.

He hears a slave-boy singing. Porters carry him to the dock and toward the palace amid tumultuous scenes of mass-hysteria and degradation like those of a modern Fascist state, and torch in hand the boy conducts the cortege through the twilit purlieus of Brundisium. They traverse streets which fill him with despair.

"Damp, deep and dark" the mounting night "mingles all in its breath." The garden-court inside the palace into which they are admitted is a romantic object:

> gentle the flowery breath, gentle the splashing of the two fountains, a dim, delicate, gently moist fragrance, as of a spring night in autumn floated cool and fine-spun above the flower-beds, and music woven into it drifted back from the forefront of the palace like transparent strips of veiling, nearing at times, receding at others, veil after veil dotted with cymbal points folded into the grey mist of voices on which the feasting yonder filtered itself, over there a resounding, blaring light-clamor, here only a tone-mist drizzling into the immense spaces of night; the square patch of heaven stretched over the court now permitted the stars to be seen again, their breathing light once more visible though occasionally dimmed by the smoke-clouds trailing beneath them, but even these were permeated by the soft, drizzling tone-mist, sharing in the wandering weaving misty murmur which impregnated the courtyard and shrouded each single thing, objects, odors and tones blended, mounting toward the heaven in the stillness of the night, and yonder at the wall, its hard-fibered trunk faintly illumined, rearing up to the height of the roof, still and crabbed, black-fanned and repelling, stood a palm, even she pregnant with night.

In the quiet room to which Virgil is shown—strikingly this resembles a comfortable room in some big modern hotel—the lad crouches for a while beside his chair. He is the symbol here of Virgil's psychic androgyny. Beyond the window "the emanations of the city, ebbing and flowing above the roofs, dissolve into purple, from purple-violet into dark blue and black." The night "extends in a constant outflow even unto the unreachable dream-caverns." Gravely the poet dismisses the boy to the banquet of the Caesar.

The night "circles in its immense space—The stars glow greatly in their great courses—On the roofs of the city the light of the easterly moon lies like a cool greenish dust." Wandering, almost staggering from his chair to the window and back again to his couch—he knows that he is soon to die—the brooding Virgil, amid extreme fluctuations of his emotional position, strives for unity with the moving power behind gods and men which he calls Fate. Five times he seems to himself to be achieving it in new-won philosophical, religious and mystical expressions in the form of free-verse elegies. From the depths of his unconscious

mind he has received an intimation that the nameless power is pregnant with some new birth. He himself has suffered rebirth.

During this nocturne the impulse to destroy the *Aeneid* seizes Virgil. It has come to him that no salvation lies in Beauty, since Beauty merely duplicates the world of forms and appearances. Art, it has come to him, has the duty of celebrating the divine secrets of Religion, itself the feeling of the Infinite Spirit. In this second of the book's four sections there occurs also the first of several presentations of hallucinatory or delirious vision. (Because of the elaborateness of their presentation they offer to array *The Death of Virgil* alongside another, classic story of a solitary alone with his visions, *The Temptations of Saint Anthony* by Flaubert: in the face of the fact that *The Temptation* is a picture of the tragedy of Romanticism, not another glorification of it). The torch-bearing lad recurs in this first hallucination, symbolizing Virgil's Genius in the Roman sense, his veritable self, his Angel as we might say; possibly also the child-spirit which endures in the heart of every great man and saves him. A feminine figure, called Plotia Hierea and representing a mistress long since abandoned by Virgil, becomes the center of the subsequent increasingly feverish and orgiastic visions.—Augustus appears in the flesh. Virgil, who has entirely outpaced his period, wonderingly surrenders the *Aeneid* to the Imperial Fuehrer and takes a long farewell of this friend of his youth. And in the book's finale—a cosmogonic poem in symphonic prose—where, identifying himself with the eternal becoming of things and attaining ecstasy and death, the poet feels himself borne as on a ship into the heart of the universe—a Dantesque Paradise—the boy floats ahead; and at the last, as an infant in the arms of the Virgin-like Plotia, symbolizes the power of endless inner rebirth, the infinite in the human soul.

We have seen the brethren of more than one of the book's features; and where we have seen them, significantly, is in the prose of Hoelderlin and the prose of Jean-Paul, the criticism of Friedrich Schlegel, the philosophical dithyrambics of Nietzsche. Certainly it was Hoelderlin who in *Hyperion* wrote sentences most

comparable to those which stretch and reach in *The Death of Virgil*. Certainly it was Jean-Paul who magically in *Hesperus* represented "transfigured nights" most comparable to the far-reaching one in Broch; nights which actually are "landscapes of the soul" and like their overwhelming brother in *Tristan und Isolde* open "infinite eyes" in the protagonists. The conviction which Broch causes to rise in Virgil during his vigil, the conviction that salvation does not lie in Beauty, since Beauty merely duplicates the world of forms and appearances, itself the limitation and thus the annihilation of the Infinite Spirit: this conviction was pretty largely that of Friedrich Schlegel at the time of his conversion to Catholicism. He wrote then that the duty of Art is to constitute itself the language of Religion and to create the social bond by imparting presentiments of the heavenly future.— The delivery of philosophical, religious and mystical concepts, gained in states of intoxication, in dithyrambic prose, as hymnic invocations and heroic manifestos: that is quite in the spirit of Nietzsche's dionysiac lyricism of knowledge. And cosmogonic poems, like the one which Broch has achieved in prose in Part IV of *The Death of Virgil*, seem to have haunted the dreams of many, if not all, of the German Romanticists.

As for the opposition which is bound to express itself to this brilliant book: it will not, we think, rise from any feeling of its offensiveness to the historical sense. Broch evidently has steeped himself in the lore of the historical Virgil, and his conception is anything but inharmonious with fact. Indeed we cannot but remark how harmonious with fact it actually is. The state of mind, to begin with, in which the author of the *Aeneid* did die appears to have been somber. At the instigation of Augustus, it will be remembered, he had undertaken his epic, the great poetic expression of the national feeling of the Roman Empire. But the work never was completed. Shortly before his death, which occurred on his return from Greece in Augustus' train, Virgil asked that the *Aeneid* be destroyed. The hypothesis that he was disenchanted with the empire of the Caesars is inevitable.—Nor is it altogether unrealistic to suppose that the idea of the world des-

tined to succeed Antiquity was latent in this pagan's psyche and gave him prophetic intimations of its coming. The thought in Virgil's poetry in several ways anticipates the Middle Ages'. Alone among the ancient poets, for example, he had a distinct conception of an after-life. His manner of living also would seem to have been concordant with that of the era which plentifully produced monks and hermits. Though one of his bucolic poems indicates his homosexuality; though a certain Plotia Hierea—possibly his model for the piteous figure of Dido—also appears to have passed through his life, he had a reputation for asceticism, and probably deserved it. Certainly mediaeval men felt him mysteriously akin to themselves and seemed to feel his confirmation of their faith. Definitely they thought that they heard Antiquity's prophecy of the coming of Christ through one of the Eclogues of this "wise-man" of Rome. At Naples, where he was buried and revered almost as a Saint, the popular idea was that he had been converted to Christianity; and Dante epitomized the feeling of the educated by causing the figure on the Mount of Purgatory called Statius to tell the one called Virgil "You did as those who walk by night and bear a light behind them, which helps them not but shows the way to those that follow."

Neither is it inharmonious with fact to conceive of an epic poet like Virgil exercising the speculative intelligence and the abstract mind in the manner of Broch's representation; despite the fact that epic poems evidently are made with percepts far more than with concepts. For the real Virgil "turned his practiced and passionate imagination on the order of all things." A student of philosophy, he freighted at least one Canto of the *Aeneid* with his philosophical vision; and the probability is that he went to Athens in the year of his death to study there in the schools.—No: the objections bound to be raised by *The Death of Virgil* will flow, we are certain, rather more from its extreme and voluminous representation of the modern cerebral or idealistic tendency—extreme enough to make the book austere reading; mainly, however, from its gratification of Romantic feeling. For while many of us despise the attacks levelled against Romanticism by

the self-styled "Humanists" and the neo-classicists, some of us feel uncomfortable in its presence and prefer Goethe, the culture of limitation, of form, and of the physical eye, "the sun of Homer."

Neither, despite *The French Revolution, Leaves of Grass* and the prose of contemporaries such as Joyce, do we possess quite the tradition of dithyrambic prose the Germans possess with their Hoelderlin and their Nietzsche. The book's style, also, may be felt to be insufficiently dramatic. Sense-impressions are chiefly here the starting-point for surging, often painful, ideas and reveries expressed in a lyrical and oratorical murmur; and while the tone of this murmur always is the character's, too often we hear the voice and see the gesture of the narrator. Objective presentation of the mind's action is also somewhat too infrequent to save the novel from at times resembling a rather static music-opera or long-winded cantata. Broch, to be sure, has sought to balance not only the lyricism but the subjectivism of his style by the periodic application of a strictly dramatic and objective method in the way of scenes in dialogue-form. These, however, may constitute another slight source of dissatisfaction. Their rhythmic life is inferior to that of the presentations of thought and vision. Indeed the long dialogue between Augustus and Virgil in Part III loses its tension.

Yet if we foresee a dispute, we also foresee its issue. Unquestionably Broch has performed a singular feat in the book. The mind, the consciousness, which is the subject of *The Death of Virgil*, unquestionably is characteristic of genius. The ardor of its feeling is characteristic of genius. Almost ecstatically this mind concentrates itself in states of intensity. Characteristic, too, is the supernormal magnitude in which the horror and the tragedy of the world appear before it; and characteristically, under a sort of religious necessity, we see, it seeks to bridge the abyss between God and Man and weld the upper and nether spheres with rhythmic speech. Its experience is deeply connected with philosophy and an intricate series of ideas. Its moods are charged with magic, and we find it seeking to give great full melodious expression to

the reactions of these changing moods. For over a century now fiction has been attempting to represent the quality of genius, to capture this quality in action. Balzac made the attempt in two little-read novels *Louis Lambert* and *The Search for the Absolute*; Romain Rolland in *Jean-Christophe*, Dreiser in *The Genius*. Literature previously had produced characters evincing unusual mental brilliance, Hamlet, for instance, and Julien of Stendhal. But it was fiction's ambition to present the essence of the individual characterized by powers of invention and origination, particularly in the aesthetic and intellectual field; and prose fiction's success has been imperfect previous to Broch's book. The novelists confined themselves to representations of the great artist or great intellectual in his relations with his environment, or of his love-affairs: spheres in which, as has been said, his actions most resemble those of the run of men. (Exceptional efforts, such as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, merely border on fiction. Possibly the most nearly successful are some of the dramatic verse-monologues of Browning, say *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, the searching portrait of the mental processes of Napoleon III; and it is interesting that Broch found the solution of prose fiction's ancient problem also in imaginatively varying material provided by history.)

Tensely, therefore, we follow the adventure of his wanderer. The new novel has still further positive qualities. It represents the force of sublimation, the transformation of personal existence and low desires into spirit. For another thing, *The Death of Virgil* conveys good philosophy poetically. Some of its little pictures, besides, are tender: the one, for instance, of the drowsy peasants on their carts shaping itself in Virgil's mind as in the dawn he hears the rumbling of cartwheels over pavements. The expression of the almost sensual modern consciousness of mass and weight is extraordinary; the manipulation of tempo and cadence, all in all masterly. Few contemporary novels have been made with a deeper mood or any mood more intricately and fully given; or convey a more singing and enchanted state of soul.

BOOK REVIEWS

SPECIAL NOTICE

THE END OF ALL MEN: C. F. Ramuz. Pantheon Books Inc.

Requires devoted reading because of the mannered style, but well worth it for the originality and grandeur of the conception. Ramuz, a Swiss writer well known in Europe, sketches the visual and concrete with a shorthand technique of painter and peasant, and ends by confronting one with the metaphysical predicament of the age.

POESIES: Stephane Mallarme. Editions Quetzal, Mexico.

An excellent edition of the poems, with a preface by the Mallarmé scholar, E. Noulet.

THIRTY POEMS: Thomas Merton. New Directions.

The author, now a monk in a Trappist Monastery, has avoided easy emulation both of Hopkins and of conventional Catholic verse. His original sensibility is as immediately felt as the wind "running in the rigging" of most of his poems.

STEPHEN HERO: James Joyce. New Directions.

A section of an early version of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Recommended without reservation to anyone interested in fine writing.

THE DEVIL'S SHARE: Denis de Rougemont. Pantheon Books Inc.

A series of aphoristic discussions loosely centered around Baudelaire's dictum that "It is the devil's cleverest wile to convince us that he does not exist." The book is sometimes showily superficial, but more often fertile in ideas and boldly imaginative, as in the chapters which present our dangerous tendency in war of projecting all evil on the enemy.

GANTS DU CIEL: Editions Fides. Montreal, Canada.

A selection of the work of nineteen young Canadian poets who write in French, with critical articles on the recent poetry of T. S. Eliot, the painter Léger, and a discussion of music by the composer Arthur Lourié. The idea of printing three or four pages of work by a number of young writers is an excellent one; the volume is well-printed and well-planned.

THREE RUSSIAN POETS: trans. by Vladimir Nabokov. New Directions.

These selections from Lermontov and Tyutchev, and especially those from Pushkin, come through into English with real poetic power; one only regrets the small size of the volume.

BAUDELAIRE, A CRITICISM: Joseph D. Bennett. Princeton Univ. Press.

A critical analysis of the poems which sometimes lapses into mere paraphrase. Since the poet never exists in a vacuum, some attempt should have been made to place the poetry in its social and historical context. Chiefly useful for the many fine translations.